

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

September 4, 2001

7:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance, this function being led by Alderman Vaillancourt.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Sysyn, Pinard, O'Neil, Lopez, Shea, Vaillancourt, Pariseau, Cashin, and Thibault

Absent: Aldermen Levasseur, Clancy, Hirschmann

Mayor Baines advised that the purpose of the special meeting was to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Baines requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Eric Sawyer, 40 Walnut Street, Manchester stated:

Many of you know me but many of you who know me do not know that I am disabled. I am physically disabled with a condition known as ALS, or Lou Gherig's disease. I also have another disability, Angolosin Spangolitis, which is a disability of a degenerative bone disease of the vertebrae so excuse me if my foot and mouth coordination are a little off this evening. I have also been told that I must be mentally disabled for coming here and speaking here tonight or at least suffering from Don Quixote complex. What I am going to speak about tonight is not about a political issue or a partisan issue. It is a human issue about being disabled and living in Manchester. I am not here to complain about ADA accessibility or some person in a department being rude to me or not being understanding for all of that can be addressed in another forum. Manchester is a City that extends many benefits and services to the population as a whole.

There are various groups within the City. For example, the elderly. However, Manchester currently extends no services to the disabled. New Hampshire State law has permitted a property tax exemption for the disabled since 1998 yet Manchester has not mastered this provision. I am here tonight to ask you to consider enacting the property tax exemption as permitted by State law for the disabled people in Manchester. When I am talking about disabled people, I am not talking about someone who walks with a limp. I am talking about people who are disabled who meet the definition of disability by Social Security. These people typically have a disability benefit of \$844/month and a majority of households that receive Social Security disability benefits, the disability benefits make up more than 50% of the household income. So the typical household income of a disabled citizen is less than \$1,800 a month. The typical age of a disabled beneficiary is between 30 and 55. That means many of them have families and children. In enacting a disability exemption, the financial impact to the City would be very small. The current census statistics show that generally 2% of the population is disabled. Of that 2%, 10% are the ones who are alone living independently. That comes to about 200 Manchester residents. With an exemption of \$100,000 and a tax rate of \$1.23, it amounts to \$24,600. If you should include the same benefits to the disabled that you extend to the elderly for water, sewer, dog licenses and alarm fees, it comes to another \$24,000 for a total revenue loss to the City of under \$50,000. This is indeed a very small sum of money for a City that can fund so many other worthy causes like providing funds and services to private entrepreneurs to build stages, to ethnic groups to hold parties in parks and if you consider this...this is an issue of humanity and fairness and I ask you to move forward and act on these provisions for a small measure of assistance to the disabled. America has typically focused on extending governmental services to the elderly or disabled based on humanity and helping those who cannot help themselves because of age or infirmity. Welfare has embraced a different concept and it was intended that it be short-term help for those who otherwise could not help themselves. I ask you in name of humanity to at least consider this. There is an interesting statistic among the disabled. Most disabled Americans do not die from their infirmities. In fact, almost known do. Most of them commit suicide. One would wonder what is so peculiar here. The reason they commit suicide is the same reason everybody else does – disparity, loss of hope, feelings of worthlessness, etc. You have a chance to help the disabled of Manchester here this evening and if you can't take these small measures then I would suggest that you even take a smaller one and that would be to publish Dr. Kavorkian's number on your website. Thank you.

Billy Dodd, 181 Mammoth Road, Manchester stated:

The first thing I want to say is we are going to title tonight's speech, Predators, Water and Favoritism. On predators, I was a cop for 11 years and I am sure the Police Chief can attest that we have plenty of predators out there. By the *Union Leader* publishing names of homeowners, they exposed single ladies who may have gotten away from abusive relationships. That is indispicable. I don't know why they did it. I don't know why the City released those names to the *Union Leader*. Your website doesn't contain them. Why did you give them to the *Union Leader*? The next thing is water, storm drains. It is nice to see that the drains around the civic center are being repaired in a timely manner while up in Ward 6 we sit with 55 gallon barrels

that have been over drains all summer. Is there a shortage of Public Works people or are there just too many drains to repair? Why? The last thing is redistricting. Now you Aldermen have been aware and have seen the plans for well over a month on redistricting. My question is why did the public hearing wait until this past Thursday night when you gentlemen have to vote on this tonight in order to get it on the ballot in November. Why wasn't this public hearing held at least three weeks ago? Eldridge Jerry. Does anybody know him? He was the governor down in Massachusetts in 1800 or so. There is a term called jerry mandering. He did some redistricting down there to suit himself and make sure that he got elected. Well on record the way that the Chairman of the Redistricting Committee said that he...utmost concern was not to disrupt an elected official and to keep him in his seat. To me, that is jerry mandering. You are keeping the political status the way it is. If any of you vote in favor of this redistricting tonight, you will be sanctioning that jerry mandering and then answer that to your constituents. Is it still going to continue to be politics as usual in the City?

Walter A. Stiles, 226 Sagamore Street, Manchester stated:

I am here tonight to sell City Hall books. Books about the City Hall restoration. We have two kinds of books. We have a hard cover book and we have a soft cover book. Both books have the same amount of pictures...I would say 212 pictures of the restoration of City Hall. Now what these books do is take you from 1997 to 1999 and it shows you all of the work that was done in the restoration of this absolutely beautiful gothic building. We are talking about restoration. Now for all intents and purposes, the building has been restored but there are still a lot of things to be done in this building to really do it up right. What we have here in this building is a functional building. We have a historical building and it is even a museum. It has three parts to the building. As you know what happened in the restoration process is we closed the Elm Street entrance and opened up the 1845 entrance, which was the original entrance to this building when the building was built in the fall of 1845. What I would like to do tonight is merely to show you both books, the hard cover book and the soft cover book. Both of these books are available downstairs in City Hall at the Information Booth. The soft cover books are available at the Manchester Historic Association up on Amherst Street and also in the Millyard Museum. As far as I am concerned, this is a very historical building and I am sure that all of you realize that Manchester has a tremendous history and along with that history is the history of this building to. For all intents and purposes, what I want to do tonight is show the public both of these books. This book is \$10 and this book is \$30. We put out 100 hard cover books and they are numbered 1-100. We put out 2,900 soft cover books. These books, for people who are interested in history, will make wonderful Christmas presents and everybody in Manchester really and truly ought to be interested in history. I would suggest that in order to get really interested in history that you join the Manchester Historic Association. Incidentally, just one historical note. Do you know that New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify the Constitution of the United States? This City here is the largest city in the State of New Hampshire and when you buy one of the other of these books you make a contribution to the City Hall Restoration Program. Incidentally, we are going to embellish the chambers and have a big City seal behind the Mayor's podium and we are going to have a City seal down in the Information Booth and

there will be various pictures that will be displayed in the connector between the two buildings. What I want you to do is just buy the books and contribute.

Richard Gagnon, 126 Wellington Hill Road, Manchester stated:

I was talking to Alderman Gatsas last week on the phone and I gave him my views of the new assessments and what I have been seeing in the *Union Leader*. We paid \$1.4 million for a new assessment. The City has been reassessed. Admittedly, there are some problems. Do we just stop all of the progress that we made in the last 10 years in going through all of the properties old and new? I don't think so. I don't think that is fair. I live in a relatively new neighborhood that has been taxed to death. Looking at the new assessments that were published in the *Union Leader*, I would save \$740, which is substantial to me. I am retired and like the first gentleman, I am disabled. I live on a fixed income so any relief in property taxes for the disabled would be greatly appreciated. More importantly, let's go forward with this new assessment and not delay it. When I bought the house last year I didn't agree with the assessment. I came down to City Hall with documentation and the process took approximately five months. My assessment was lowered and hence my taxes were lowered. It took five months. There was a mechanism in place and it worked. Now we have the reassessment team, still under contract, with a system for immediate review of all of the disputed assessments. We ought to stop the crap and get on with life. Thank you.

Mayor Baines stated Ralph Garst donated this lectern to City Hall in recognition of Leo Bernier's work with the restoration project and I would like to publicly thank Ralph for his efforts in doing that and also specifically for recognizing Leo's work and publicly acknowledging that.

Mayor Baines advised that if there is no one else present wishing to speak, There being no one further wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Pinard, duly seconded by Alderman Lopez, it was voted that all comments be taken under advisement and any written documentation presented be received and filed.

There being no further business to come before the special meeting, on motion of Alderman Pariseau, duly seconded by Alderman Thibault, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk